Appendix 3. Correspondence pertinent to the trip made by David and Marian Fairchild to Colombia in 1941. The trip was part of a larger expedition to Colombia, Guatemala, and Panama. Courtesy of the Archive and Library of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

From David Fairchild to Nancy Fairchild.
June 23. 1/3

Bates, Marston & Nancy Bell

Dr Marston Bates
Apartado 2308
Bogota Colombia

DAVID FAIRCHILD
THE KAMPONG, 4013 DOUGLAS ROAD
COCONUT GROVE, FLORIDA

June 23d. 1941

Dear Children;

Your mother has kept you informed of our plans and told you we are flying to Barranquilla on the 26th and to Cali on the 8th of July after a visit with Graham and Elva. I have in my little red notebook the following notation; "Look for Mr. Rudolph of General Motors who will take charge of you in Cali. Stop in the hotel Alferez Real. Cost by day auto trip Cali-Bogota 90 pesos with one night stop or if take 3 or 4 days will be 35 pesos per day. I think 3 day trip would give you all the time you want."

Rendezvous Hotel Granada, Bogota which has an elevator and climbing stairs in Bogota is difficult.

This looks simple enough and probably is but you know that your Dad is always particular about these details of travel having had many unpleasant experiences due to vague directions.

It would be mild to say I am looking forward to this adventure with a good deal of excitement for it is now 43 years since I saw the Andes and went over the Cumbre on mule back and I know the thrills that are coming at the sight of the snow clad peaks and volcanoes and those vast plains that slope down towards the great Amazon river.

Of course we shall have to get our accomodations for the return to Miami and they may have to be air ones but I have wondered if we might not take the boat from Bogota to Baranquilla and avoid the quick descent and see something.

I have fussed a good deal about clothes and wonder if Villavicencio is in a region of slippery mud. I presume it is and I shall slide all over the place on my rubber

soled shoes but I can't help it for my feet refuse to function in leather soled ones. They land me on my back pre pretty quickly. The limit of wiight will forbid a tuxedo of the black variety so if you are planning any function in Bogota you will have to explain your dads idiosynchracies.

The news this morning is pretty terrific but of late the clouds have become so dense about my head that this move on Germany's part does not make me more puzzled about the future. I look upon the phenomenon of war as one of insanity in which no particular advantage comes to anyone.

Glenn is slowly but surely climbing up the ladder to health again and by October should be in shape to take up the burdens of his life again with the proviso that he does not work so hard as he used to and takes all sorts of precaut ions. The place in Ft.Lauderdale is now labelled up and takes on an appearance of a Botanic Garden such as no other place on the coast here presumes to have. People who go there will learn something and I fancy will not leave without having made a purchase or two because the grafted and budded plants there are in excellent condition and of good varieties

Your little music house dear Nancy is to be enlarged a bit and take over the Stephen Parrish family of two. Stephen is keen to shore it up, put glass sliding windows in the "kitchen" end and a septic tank West of it.

I think this is a good idea for who knows into what conditions our finances may be thrown by th s war and we can always find a nook to live in here since we have three littl houses. Eaton has built a big house next door and put up a high wall and will plant out fruit trees all over his p place but I fear will want us to fill in our front land to get rid of the sand flies. Bert will join with him I fear and then what? But worries are headaches in the head and should not be tolerated. I have sent a paper to Korzybsk who holds a big Congress on General Semantics in Denver in A

But I must stop now and pack so dear ones adieu for a couple of weeks. Then for the reunion.'.'.'.'.' Ha Ha.'.'.'

From David Fairchild to Nancy Fairchild.
June 23. 3/3

DAVID FAIRCHILD
THE KAMPONG, 4013 DOUGLAS ROAD
COCONUT GROVE, FLORIDA

I shall be so delighted to see you three youngsters that nothing much will matter. If you cant meet us we will somehow or other get to your house or the Institute.

Your mother has written all the news that's fit to send and besides nothing much counts these days this war business takes up so much of our waking thoughts.

Your most affectionate dad.

Daddy

From Robert Montgomery to David Fairchild.
August 18. 1/2

Montgomery, R.H. 125

PRESIDENT EMERITUS
DR. DAVID FAIRCHILD

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DR. E. D. MERRILL
ADMINISTRATOR OF BOTANICAL COLLECTIONS, HARVARD UNIVERSITY; DIRECTOR, ARNOLD ARBORETUM

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INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA

COCONUT GROVE, FLORIDA

ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR
WERNER F. NEHRLING

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT
A. C. JORDAHN

August 18, 1941.

Dr. David Fairchild,
c/o Dr. Marston Bates,
Rockefeller Foundation,
Villavicencio, Colombia.

Dear David:

Your letter of July 27th reached me very promptly a week or two ago. Nell was visiting her mother in North Carolina at the time but she has now had a chance to read it and I can assure you that we both thoroughly enjoyed hearing from you. We were particularly pleased to know that your air trips all turned out so well. Even here we are accustomed to delays on account of weather but you seem to have had good luck all the way through.

Jordahn has reported the receipt of the seeds that you sent and was hopeful of good results. Things are moving fairly satisfactorily at the F.T.G. The Bailey Palm Glade is assuming creditable shape. We have moved the pumphouse and wells over to the corner opposite the sausage tree. We have started the avenues of palms leading from the Library to the lake and have planted quite a number of good sized palms. The amphitheatre is going more slowly because it was necessary to get a great quantity of boulders to make a foundation for the wall which surrounds it. These boulders are being obtained from the blasting necessary to construct the Palm Glade We had no rain in August until Saturday, which caused so much watering that it held back other work. If we would only have some of the rains which you have been having, it would have been a godsend.

This morning I had a telegram of resignation from Nehrling. He has recently been hunting another job, which bears out my very first impression of him which is that he has never at any time held one job very long. Roy Matthews was let out by the County and we have taken him over temporarily working on the Palm Glade. He is pretty good but not good enough to take charge but we are lucky to have him as he is as good as Nehrling. I have had Jordahn on the job practically all Summer. Jimmie Donn has been interested and helpful and I think that under the circumstances he will take hold a little more actively than before.

All that you have said regarding the wax palms and other trees have made us quite envious. We are not planning any trips, however, beyond the confines of this country. I have been pretty

busy working out plans to bring in subscriptions to the Bailey Palm Glade. In a week or two, we will send out a letter to all members of the New York Botanical Garden. I am afraid that if we don't start an active campaign next month, the garden clubs will get very cold on the project.

Our very best to you and Marion and any of your children whom you see in the near future.

Sincerely,

RHM

RHM:AD

From David Fairchild to Robert Montgomery.
September 14. 1/1

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Rockefeller Foundation
Villavicencio Colombia
Sept 4th 1941

Dear Bob;

Your long enthousiastic letter of Aug. 18 and one from Jordahn of the same date arrived only today. I am answering both.

Nehrling's leaving does not surprise me. He has not much of his dear old Father's love of plants and is steeped in the lore of plant fertilizers and after all perhaps he was offered a much better salary by Hector.

I like Matthews for I think he is really interested in the plants as species and will care for them as one cares for pets and that element is a most important one in the conduct of a garden like ours.

So long as Jordahn and Ray remain true to the work I can ~~wax~~ feel confidence that the plant material I send in will be given attention and later has a good chance of making its way into the permanent plans of the garden.

Of course Mrs Love and her devotion to the clerical affairs is a very great asset and I hope that her vacation will build her up for another bout at the coming season which is now approaching.

As for Marian and my own plans they are in cahos just at this time for Marston is still in New York getting his poor hands cured and we do not know when he may return and Nancy is still in Panam where she had a rather serious operation which laid her out completely for three weeks. We expect her however in a day or two and can than make plans. The District Director of the Rock. Foundation, Dr. Crawford arrives here today and I will have a talk with him and perhaps settle things. In the mean time Marian and I are keeping house with Nancy's spanish servants and seeing that the baby does not catch any of the many diseases which take off the children of Colombia.

Marian herself has been laid up too but is now all right again. Through it all however dear Bob we have been having a very interesting time because of the fact that these Llanos Oriental represent the very edge of the known tropical plant forested area of the vast Amazon valley. Every time I get out I find something that is entirely new to me and that my somewhat fertile imagination tells me would be an asset to our gardens there in Coconut Grove. So aside from the satisfaction of feeling we were necessary to the solution of our children's problems ,--serious ones too--- we have the pleasure of knowing that some very pretty and valuable plants are now growing in the F.T. G. and may after we have passed on be admired and even loved by those who care for the aesthetic things of life.

There has been another side of our life here. We have met some very interesting people; Colombians and Americans, who are interested in plants and at my suggestion they are forming I understand a Garden Club in Bogota of which the first president is to be Madam Santos the wife of the President of Colombia. Madam Santos seems to be a woman of a great deal of power among the women because of her charities and her keen interest in everything which will help bring out the latent abilities of the Colombian women. Furthermore she appears to be interested in her own gardening and has accepted the suggestion that she head a Colombian garden club. I am asked to give these ladies a talk and I am trying to interest the Garden Clubs of America to take a real hand in ~~them~~ helping ~~of~~ to organize this garden club and also to help bring on a rwal Flower Show which would attract the attention of the world to the unparalled opportunities which this vast mountain area has with its foothills, vast forested tropical plains, high alpine mountain peaks and innumarable little valleys where for generations separate cultures of all sorts have been carried on.

I hear that there is a plan on foot to establish somewhere in the central american states or perhaps Venezuela a research station and that Wallace is fathering this. Do you know anything about it? Colombia should be considered in any such plan I think.

I hear from Jordahn that the Bailey Palm Glade is coming on apace and will look like something this fall. If we can only get our people to see that we have THINGS with beautiful forms for them to look at we may divert their minds from the horrors of the war.

From Marian Fairchild to Nell Montgomery.
September 14. 1/2

Villavicencio, Sept.10.1941

Dear Nell,

The days are so uneventful that it doesnt seem possible they can be sliding by so fast and that it is already September!

We have had a lovely time here, in spite of all the unpleasant things we didnt expect, like Marston's hands and Nancy Bell's operation. But we like this place, and the baby is adorable and there are hundreds of new and interesting plants and lots of nice people who are glad to drop down off the high plateau of Bogota and stay with is in this pleasant climate, so, altogether its been a great success, this trip of ours.

We are planning to go to Bogota next week, and, parking the baby and nurse with her devoted godmother, make a few collecting trips in the car with Nance. I havent yet given up the hope of coming home via Guatemala, but it depends a good deal upon when Marston will be well enough to come home, as we would like to see things settled for them before we leave. I suppose we shall be home early in October, if we dont go to Guatemala,and not until the first of November if we do. David is getting a bit homesick for his own plants at home and wants to see whats going on in the F.T.G. but I feel once we get home, dear knows when we shall ever get away again!

Nancy Bell has just come into the room and says "Oh, please give her my best". Fairly soon we are going out to dig up some stunning new vines we have found and are afraid we cant get seeds of. One is a big scarlet passion flower - perfectly gorgeous.

I learned quite a lot of Spanish while Nancy Bell was in the hospital- I had to, as the servants know no English at all, but it was rather tough sledding. I only hope some of it will stick, but I'm afraid it wont; anyway the price of meat and the difficulty in getting butter and what to have for desert isnt the usual conversational Spanish. The townspeople are all most friendly and kind, and in the highlands of Colombia there is scarcely a trace of Negro blood - to my great surprise. I rather expected the shop people to take advantage of us too, but not at all; in fact they are quite embarrassing in presenting us

with the things we come in to buy - the spring for the baby's jumper was one the man had at home and wasnt using - of course he couldnt think of charging us for that - oh, yes, the druggist had some wax David could use for his grafting - there was just some he had that he didnt need - and so it goes. It gives one a very warm, friendly, nice feeling.

Huge busses go by our door all the time, bringing in produce from the country to the market above us - its amusing to notice the names on them - they all have names. My pet is El Tigre de Villavicencio - its so utterly absurd! Lots of the busses use the sirens we reserve for fire engines and ambulances, so our street is not the quietest place I have ever been. Its funny - before we started off with Anne we thought we had to have soft matrasses, but we ended by sleeping on the deck. Then we thought, yes, we can use any kind of matrasses now, but we do like quiet, and, here we are, our heads, when we are in bed, are only the width of the adobe wall from the narrow sidewalk of the street that leads to the market! So I guess the reformation of the Fairchilds is complete.

The peace and seclusion of Nancy Bells patios are charming as you step in off the street and they are delightfully settled here, with adequate space and lots of elbow room, while the things they have picked up abroad make it most unusual and beautiful.

Its been nice to get Bob's letters and it will be still nicer to see you both again. David says to tell you the ladies in Bogota are starting a garden club, largely, I may add, through his suggestion, and he is to address them when we go up there. The President's wife is to be president; they say flowers are her greatest interest in life although, poor woman, she seems to grow them largely to take to the cemetery to put on the grave of her only child. Perhaps the club can help her to new happiness.

With our love to you both, As ever yours,

Marian